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THE RAS SHAMRA
INSCRIPTIONS AND THEIR SIGNIF-
ICANCE FOR THE HISTORY
OF HEBREW RELIGION

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY
SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1934

By
WALTER GEORGE WILLIAMS

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THE RAS SHAMRA INSCRIPTIONS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE HISTORY OF HEBREW RELIGION¹

BY WALTER G. WILLIAMS
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Students of Hebrew religious culture and of oriental history have long had cause to mourn the dearth of native source material for the reconstruction of the religious culture of the Canaanites and Phoenicians. Of the extant inscriptional material in Phoenician by far the majority has come from outside of Phoenicia, and with the exception of a few inscriptions the literature is of a date subsequent to 600 B.C. A complete corpus of Phoenician inscriptions consisted of but little else than votive steles and memorial stones. Not more than ten deities were named directly, though it was possible to recover many others from theophorous names. Indeed, the Old Testament gave more light upon Phoenician-Canaanite religious practices than the inscriptions threw upon the Old Testament.² Secondary sources from Greek and Roman writers, and Babylonian epics, were invoked to supply the missing information.³ Even here there was much doubt and the over-skepticism of the literary critics of the past century consigned Sanchuniathon and others to the limbo.

Even worse is the fact that the absence of adequate source material was recognized by few. When it is remembered that the Canaanites and Phoenicians had a common religious culture and that into this culture the Hebrews came and were absorbed, then it becomes apparent that a better understanding of the Canaanite and Phoenician religious customs would shed much light upon Old Testament utterances couched consciously or unconsciously in terms of them.

¹ Read before the midwest branch of the American Oriental Society at Evanston, Ill., April 13, 1934.

² Cf. Judg. 2:11-13; I Kings 5:1-7:50; 11:5; II Kings 16:3-4; 21:3-7; 23:4; 23:11 f.; II Chron. 14:5; 28:24 f.; 33:3 ff.; 34:4, 7; Jer. 31:1 ff.; Ezek. 8:3, 14; 16:1 ff.; Mal. 2:10 ff., etc.

³ See Wood, "The Religion of Canaan," *JBL*, XXXV (1916), 1-133, 163-279.

Since 1929 the lack of native source material is somewhat changed, thanks to the discoveries of MM. Chenet and Schaeffer⁴ at Ras Shamra⁵ on the north Syrian coast fifteen kilometers to the north of Laodicea. Père E. Dhorme has fixed the date of the destruction of the site about the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the twelfth century B.C. This agrees with the archaeological evidence. In the spring of 1932 the writer read a paper before the American Oriental Society in which, among other things, he pointed out the significance of this material for Old Testament studies. Since then he has devoted himself to the rapidly increasing material and literature concerning Ras Shamra.⁶ The purpose of this article is to set forth some of the writer's conclusions. The material was examined philologically after the method, with some modification, of the Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute;⁷ it was also approached from the standpoint of cultural background.⁸

CONTENT OF THE RAS SHAMRA INSCRIPTIONS

The inscriptions from Ras Shamra may be summarized as follows:

Ras Shamra, 1929.—The texts found in 1929 may be divided into three groups. The first group consists of religious matters. Tablets 1, 3, 9, 12, 17, 19, 22, 23+48, and 33 list the proper offerings to be made to the respective gods at the designated times. Tablet 2 gives the ritual and observations necessary for obtaining relief from the

⁴ See *Syria*, X (1929), 285-97; XII (1931), 1-14; XIII (1932), 1-27; XIV (1933), 93-127. Inscriptions autographed by Virolleaud *ibid.*, X (1929), 304-10, Pls. LXI-LXXX; XII (1931), 193-224, Pls. XXXVIII-XLIII; *ibid.*, XIII (1932), 113-63, Pls. XXV-XXVIII; *ibid.*, XIV (1933), 128-51, Pls. XVIII-XIX; and by Dhorme, *ibid.*, pp. 229-37, Pl. XXV.

⁵ Professor Albright (*BASOR*, No. 46, p. 20, n. 19) identifies Ras Shamra with ancient Ugarit. Schaeffer's identification with Šapuna (Djapouna) is more probably correct (*op. cit.*, XIII [1932], 24 ff.). Šapuna likely lay, as Thureau-Dangin suggests (cf. *ibid.*, p. 26), within the suzerainty of Ugarit, which occurs in the Amarna letters with both city and territory determinative. It is to be noted that "NQMD, king of Ugarit," is listed in Tablet 2 (Ras Shamra, 1929) as an enemy. See also Tablet No. 4474 (RS 1932), ll. 10-11 (*ibid.*, XIV [1933], 229 ff.).

⁶ The continuance of this work, under the supervision of Professor W. C. Graham, has been made possible by a subvention from the Rockefeller Foundation for humanistic research.

⁷ For detail on method see Breasted, *Oriental Institute*, pp. 378 ff. The writer is indebted to Professor A. T. Olmstead for introducing him to the Ras Shamra inscriptions and through whose seminar many valuable suggestions have been made.

⁸ In this phase of the study the writer is greatly indebted to the teaching and kindly counsels of Professor W. C. Graham. His knowledge of significance of "the dominant cultural pattern" for Old Testament studies has been invaluable.

oppressors. Number 29 gives a list of names followed by אֶחָד, "one," and No. 11 is another list of names; these are followed by שְׁלֹשָׁה, probably a gentilic as suggested by the new genealogical list (*Syria*, XV, 245). It is probable that both are temple lists crediting communicants with the fulfilment of temple obligations.

The second group consists of letters partly religious and partly business. It includes No. 5, which deals with instruction on religious rite. Tablet 6 is divided into four parts, dealing first with family matters, such as the question of a bride-price, the latter part of the letter dealing with more specifically business matters. Tablet 8+31 is a business letter telling of the disposition of a consignment of wine. Number 13+43 may or may not belong to this group, but in any case it deals with religious obligations. Tablet 18 is a letter revealing the names of the correspondent and the priest to whom he writes. It also includes the names of certain gods. Number 21 is from the same correspondent and is concerned with economic matters.

The third group is a miscellaneous collection largely of texts so badly broken as to make the translation doubtful. Tablet 15 is the deed of a house giving the owner's name and witnesses. Number 16 is a grammatical exercise. The only other intelligible tablet is No. 32, which deals with a covenant and refers to the "seal."⁹

The first Alein Baal epic.—Since 1929 several epic poems have been discovered. At the opening of the first epic Alein Baal is evidently already dead and the gods are met in conclave to make some provision for the interregnum. El asks the goddess Asherat-of-the-Sea for one of her sons. Asherat consents and Ishtar-Araf is chosen. The tablet is broken and the next scene portrays Anat seeking Alein Baal. She is evidently the sister-wife. She demands of Môt, Alein Baal's murderer, where she may find her brother. She determines to search for him. After another break in the tablet comes the conviction that Alein Baal will be resurrected. Still later comes the question, "Where is Alein Baal?" The last part of the tablet gives the impression that Alein Baal is again alive, and punishment is meted out to Môt.

The second Alein Baal epic.—This tablet is largely concerned with the building of a temple, possibly of a sanctuary which was first

⁹ Tablets 4 and 7 are omitted because they are not in Phoenician and so far have not been translated.

erected upon the settlement of Ras Shamra. In the opening lines it is stated that Baal¹⁰ does not have a temple as do the other gods, and permission is sought from El to remedy this objectionable state of affairs. An offering is made, therefore, to El, and a very elaborate fashioning of gold and silver is part of this gift. Hiyon is the artificer. A break in the tablet makes the connection between columns I and II unintelligible. The story continues with someone being chased into the river and deprived of kingly office, the royal symbols being burned in the fire. Instruction in column III deals with offerings to be made on several days. Columns IV-V open possibly with the sacrifice with asses and appearance before El similar to the preceding epic; a feast of the gods follows, with bread and the "blood of trees," that is, bread and wine. Again comes the complaint that Baal has no proper religious home. The command is given: "Build one." The story again breaks off and is resumed with Alein Baal and KSR-and-HSS in disagreement regarding the placement of windows and "skylights" in this new sanctuary. Then come seven offerings, perhaps to seek an oracle to decide this conflict. The solution is found in the succeeding column (VII) and Alein Baal is to have the honor of placing the windows and skylights in the temple. KSR-and-HSS is to have charge of the opening of these outlets, which correspond to the "windows of heaven." The opening of the windows demands the corresponding opening of the heavens by the "Rider of the Clouds," Baal (Alein Baal), and the consequent gift of rains. Môt is reported to be saying from the underworld: "Someone makes fat both gods and men." Fertility has been achieved by sympathetic magical rites. Column VIII is a problem and appears to be a curse upon one of the gods. The name of NQMD, king of Ugarit, appears along the edge of the tablet.

Ras Shamra C.—A tablet published under the title "*La naissance des dieux gracieux et beaux*"¹¹ deals with magical ritual for the inducement of early rains. The obverse of the tablet seems to alternate rubric and rite. Again there is the ritualistic eating of bread and the

¹⁰ In this tablet it is clear that Baal here means Alein Baal. A number of parallel statements with the names used alternately attests this. Confusion arises from the fact that Baal sometimes means Alein son of Baal and at others Baal himself. See Dussaud's table of god relationships, *RHR*, CIII, 407; cf. *Syria*, XV, 301 ff. and pl. XXXIX, col. II, l. 18.

¹¹ Virolleaud, *Syria*, XIV (1933), 128-51.

drinking of wine. Ritualistic cultivation of vineyard and field follow.¹² Invocation is made to the gods by means of ceremonials, including the boiling of a kid in its milk.¹³

The reverse opens with scenes near the pit of the sea. A voice of a goddess is heard, possibly from the depths of Sheol, calling to the God of Love and pleading for the support of the hand of El. Doves are sacrificed, perhaps symbolical of the sacrifice of the temple women to divine service. Thereafter they function as wife and consort of the god. The conception and birth of Saḥar and Shalem follow. El is notified of the birth of these deities, which is apparently to be followed by a period of fruitfulness, and the rite specifically points out that its objective is to obtain the early rains.

CONFLICT BETWEEN BAALISM AND YAHWISM

The last poem is to be recognized as a part of the magical rite and liturgy to insure rain and fecundity.¹⁴ Attention is also drawn to the second Alein Baal epic, in which the placing of windows in the temple, corresponding to the rifts in the clouds, is directly connected with the ritual for inducing rain in season. Sympathetic magic is a fundamental part of much ritualistic religion; particularly is this true of the nature religions, better known throughout the Old Testament as Baalism. By imitating an act, by doing something parallel to it, or even by intoning a description of it, any desired effect may be procured.¹⁵ In the later combination of religion and magic, it was believed that men could "help" the gods by means of such sympathetic magic.

This leads us directly to the conflict between Baalism and Yahwism. That there was such a conflict is well attested by the greater prophets who so thoroughly denounced Baalism. The pictures presented to us by the prophets and Lucian's *de dea syra* emphasize the orgiastic rites and bacchanalian festivals. Dr. Herbert G. May¹⁶ has given us what he calls the "Cult Mood," and he too lays stress upon the physical appeal of Baalism. This is a true picture of the period of which he

¹² Cf. W. C. Graham, *AJSL*, XLV (1929), 167-78.

¹³ Cf. Max Radin, "The Kid in Its Mother's Milk," *ibid.*, XL (1923), 209 ff.

¹⁴ See Gaster's comment regarding the epic of Alein Baal in *Archiv Orientalni*, V (1933), 118-23.

¹⁵ Cf. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (London, 1914), I, 3; cf. also Hooke, *Myth and Ritual* (Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 3 f.

¹⁶ "The Fertility Cult in Hosea," *AJSL*, XLVIII (1932), 93 ff.

writes, but what of the underlying philosophy? Granting the fundamental premise of sympathetic magic, then we must admit that the position of Baalism is tenable. After all, there is no difference in philosophy or purpose between the American farmer praying for rain and the devotee of Tammuz pleading for fructifying showers, though the technique employed may be quite different. Wherein, then, lay the conflict of Yahwism with this older culture? The conflict consisted of two parts. There were those who maintained that Yahweh was superior to Baal. Theirs was a fight for the supremacy of the god of a national group. The contest on Mount Carmel was to be decided, and a god chosen on the basis of which deity could give the needed rain.¹⁷ The adherents of this nationalistic group plead that Yahweh is responsible for the prosperity of the people and that the people have robbed Yahweh of what rightfully belongs to him when they have made offering to the Baalim. On the other hand, there is the group that insists upon the difference of fundamental philosophy. Yahweh did not need the help of sympathetic magic. These laid the foundations upon which monotheism could be built.

It is not easy to divide the literary prophets into the two classes suggested. The thinking, at times, is far from clear. Hosea, for instance, points out specifically that Yahweh and not Baal gave Israel her corn, wine, and oil, etc.¹⁸ At the same time he pleads for a new terminology,¹⁹ and one wonders if perhaps he saw the danger of syncretism. The clash was a bitter one. The *‘am-ha-areš* and many of their leaders had been conquered by the culture into which they had come. The purist group fought for an idealized religion of the desert. The prophets so categorically denounced Baalism that their dire forebodings have prevented even modern scholars from inquiring into the possibility that there may have been a contribution to religious thought even here. Can any good come out of Baalism? Come and see.

Whether one accepts the hypothesis that there was a "double entry" into Canaan, first under Joshua at the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century and, second, some two hun-

¹⁷ I Kings 18:1 ff. Text emended as suggested by May, *op. cit.*, p. 78; cf. the parallel situation in I Sam. 7:3 ff. especially vv. 6, 9, and 10.

¹⁸ Hos. 2:8.

¹⁹ Hos. 2:16-17.

dred years later from the south under Moses, or clings to the biblical tradition of Joshua succeeding Moses and entering from "beyond Jordan,"²⁰ the fact remains that for about two centuries before the incoming of the Yahweh partisans there had been constant infiltration from the desert to Canaan. The invaders, though partly assimilated to the culture of their new neighbors, ever remained *Habiri*. Having no organization and no intertribal loyalties, they would quickly have been lost had it not been for the fact that they were not welcomed into the ranks of the settled Canaanites. With the incoming of a large body of conquerors, they found refuge with this larger body, but at the same time they made it easier for one after another of the larger group to become acquainted with the new agricultural environment and to forget the tribe and god loyalties they had assumed. It has been suggested that the period of greatest apostasy from Yahwism to Baalism was at the time of the great prophets. The fact that a few outstanding individuals denounce a practice does not prove that that practice is more prevalent than when there is absolute acquiescence or silence. The period of greatest abandonment of a belief is likely to be when it first comes into conflict with another belief and before it has had a chance to prove its worth. For Israel it was on entering Canaan.

THE LOVE OF GOD

As one examines biblical and archaeological evidence one is impressed by the fact that the religion of the desert is a harsh one, with the male deity decidedly to the fore. Somewhere in their wanderings the Hebrews made covenant with a mountain deity, and, fused with their desert experience, they arrived in Canaan with a god-concept quite opposite to that of their new neighbors. The deities of the Canaanites and Phoenicians were both masculine and feminine, with the feminine predominant, and with great stress upon the love element. To be sure, the physical aspect was the all-important phase, but there were inherent possibilities. If the gods had connubial rela-

²⁰ C. Steuernagel, *Einwanderung der israelitischen Stämme* (1901); J. P. Peters, *Early Hebrew History* (1904); E. Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (1906); F. Böhl, *Kanaaner und Hebräer* (1911); L. B. Paton, *JBL*, XXXII (1913), 1 ff.; J. M. P. Smith, *AJSL*, XXXII (1916), 81 ff.; E. Sellin, *Gilgal* (1917); C. F. Burney, *Israel's Settlement in Canaan* (1918); D. D. Luckenbill, *AJT*, XXII (1918), 24 ff.; T. J. Meek, *ibid.*, XXIV (1920), 209 ff.; *AJSL*, XXXVII (1921), 101 ff.; C. F. Burney, *Judges* (2d ed., 1920), pp. 1v ff.; A. T. Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria* (1932), pp. 194 ff., 245 ff.

tions,²¹ then it was possible that the gods sometimes experienced love on a higher plane, just as man does. And if the purpose of divine marriage was for the purpose of fructifying the earth for man, then the gods might be suspected of some feeling for man. There is no evidence that the nature religions ever arrived at these logical conclusions, but after living within this environment for some five hundred years, the Hebrews produced a Hosea with his message of the love of God. Agricultural life had taught men to trust in the processes of nature. It has been suggested that in the mythical poem from Ras Shamra²² we have evidence of man's belief in the regulation of the seasons. And among the Hebrews, J can say, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."²³ Trust and love go hand in hand.

THE DIVINE KING AND MESSIANISM

Some two or three hundred years of settlement among the Canaanites convinced the Hebrews that they should be "like all the nations" and have a king. Rather grudgingly Samuel found a man to act in such a capacity. Certainly there was opposition from the individualists of the desert tradition. The record shows that Saul was but little more than a guerilla chieftain heading up the combined forces of tribal groups whenever necessity dictated. David, however, aspired to a kingship of a different type.²⁴ He knew something of the monarchs of the north Syrian coast. His contacts with the Phoenicians are well attested.²⁵ Laying his plans carefully, David built up public respect for the office of king long before he himself held that power. He was a good showman and staged several little dramas in which he demonstrated the divine kingship of Saul. More than once he had Saul's life in his hands, but he could not put forth his "hand against the Lord's

²¹ Cf. Ras Shamra C, ll. 51 ff.; *Syria*, XIV (1933), Pl. XIX.

²² Cf. Second Alein Baal epic, *Syria*, XIII (1932), Pl. XXVII, col. VII; see also Dus-saud, *op. cit.*, CV (1932), 245-302.

²³ Gen. 8:22.

²⁴ Stimulated by the article of Professor J. M. P. Smith, "Traces of Emperor Worship in the Old Testament," *AJSL*, XXXIX (1922), 32-39. Professor Graham and the writer arrived at independent conclusions as to the existence of the concept of divine kingship among the Hebrews. Frequent consultation and many stimulating suggestions from Professor Graham have resulted in this section of the study. Cf. also C. W. McEwan, "Oriental Origin of Hellenistic Kingship," *SAOC*, No. 13 (1935).

²⁵ Cf. II Sam. 5:11; 24:7; I Kings 5:1 ff.

anointed." With Saul out of the way, David was free to accept that divine kingship for himself. As king he also had priestly functions and it is more than probable that the dance before the ark was a ritual dance. The word describing the dance is *hapax legomenon* to the Old Testament. The only other occurrence, apart from New Hebrew and perhaps Arabic, is in a poem from Ras Shamra²⁶ where the word is used in describing the action of the god in the ritual. The occurrence not only attests the translation "danced" but also indicates a technical usage of the word. Certainly the building of the altar on the threshing floor of Araunah²⁷ to stay the pestilence of Yahweh shows David in the function of a divine king with priestly office.

Concomitant with divine kingship is the concept of a Messiah.²⁸ It is significant that David comes to be the great ideal. From his dynasty shall come the messianic king.²⁹ This king is to be endowed with superhuman qualities.³⁰ He will reflect the idealized character of David. His reign is to be unusual. While there are differences of detail, yet certain features are uniform regarding this king and his kingdom. The Messiah is to rule over an earthly kingdom, with Judah as the people and with Jerusalem as the center. With this kingdom we cannot be concerned except in so far as it reflects the character of its ruler. Great prosperity is to attend the efforts of the people. Extraordinary fertility is to be one of the pleasures of that new day and a rapid harvest is pictured.³¹ The extent of the kingdom is to be as great as "in the days of old." For all of these good features the messianic king is directly responsible. It has been suggested³² that "to some extent the messianic hope was born of the sense of present enfeeblement and fatuity, especially when the present was compared

²⁶ Second Alein Baal Epic, *Syria*, XIII, Pl. XXVI, col. IV, l. 29.

²⁷ II Sam. 24:15-25.

²⁸ It is recognized that distinction is to be made between the great dynastic figure and the messianic agent. Christian specialization of the term "Messiah" has resulted in its identification with the messianic agent. But the concept of the agent was developed in reaction against the idea of the dynastic figure. The ultimate background of the two is therefore the same.

²⁹ Isa. 9:1-7; 11:1-5; Mic. 5:1-5; II Sam. 7:12-17; Ezek. 34:24; Matt. 1; Luke 3:23 ff.

³⁰ Isa. 9:6-7.

³¹ Amos 9:11-15; Hos. 2:18-25; Joel 2:18-3:2, reading "prosperity, change of fortune" instead of "captivity."

³² North, "Hebrew Estimate of the Monarchy," *AJSL*, XLVIII (1931), 11.

with the past, which in its turn became more and more idealized." To be sure, disappointment in the monarchy was offset with hopes for the future. But it is strangely significant that the idealized functions of the messianic king are exactly those of the divine king of the ancient Orient. No mere overbearing potentate with self-centered imperialism was desired; but one would be welcomed who was the servant of the god, with power to preserve the territory of that god's sway, and to bring prosperity to god's people through fertility of that territory. Curiously contradictory is the attitude of the religious leaders of Israel who condemn the kings for association with the foreign cultus, yet who posit ideals borrowed from that same cultus as exemplary. One is suspicious that, again, popular thinking dictated a compromise.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

A new attack upon the problem of the concept of resurrection is justified only because no satisfactory solution of the question has yet been made, and with the arrival of new materials some aid may be found. It is necessary, first of all, to dispossess ourselves of any preconceived theology, either present or past. That the Hebrews received some stimulation from their neighbors³³ has been suggested and denied many times. In turn the Egyptians,³⁴ Babylonians,³⁵ Persians,³⁶ and Greeks³⁷ have been made father to the Hebrew concept of a resurrection. Contact through literature has failed, because of the fact that the demonstrably borrowed literature does not convey the idea we are seeking to establish. Perhaps because of the lack of literature, little attention has been paid to the possibility of Canaanite influence.³⁸

A collection of essays entitled *Myth and Ritual*³⁹ demonstrates the

³³ Cf. Knudson, *Religious Teaching in the Old Testament* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1918), p. 407; Kuenen, *Religion of Israel* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1874-75), III, 43.

³⁴ H. J. Cadbury, "Egyptian Influence in the Book of Proverbs," *Jour. of Relig.*, IX (1929), 99 ff.

³⁵ G. F. Moore, *History of Religions* (New York: Scribner's, 1929), p. 228; L. B. Paton, "Babylonian Influence in the Doctrine of Sheol," *Bib. World*, XXXV (1910), 159-71.

³⁶ J. H. Moulton, *The Treasure of the Magi* (Oxford: University Press, 1917); Knudson, *op. cit.*, p. 405; Mills, *Avesta Eschatology* (Chicago: Open Court, 1908).

³⁷ H. W. Robinson, *Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* (New York: Scribner's, 1913), p. 96; Sellin, *Die alttestamentliche Religion im Rahmen der andern altorientalischen* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1908), p. 55; *Die Spuren griechischer Philosophie im Alten Testament* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1905).

³⁸ Our purpose here is not to deny any possibility of later influence from these sources but to point out the priority of Canaanite contact.

³⁹ Edited by S. H. Hooke (Oxford University Press, 1933).

dependence of much of the Hebrew thought upon Canaanite culture. It is a substantiation and development of the position taken by Kittel several years ago.⁴⁰ At the time of its writing, but little was known of the epics of Ras Shamra.⁴¹ Careful examination of this literature from the north Syrian coast indorses Hooke's contention. The list of biblical passages alluded to by Virolleaud, Dussaud, Dhorme, *et al.*, is already long. But dependence in general does not evidence dependence in particular. Therefore it is essential that we examine Hebrew literature with respect to its possible dependence upon Canaanite culture for the concept of a resurrection.

The general consensus of opinion among biblical scholars today is that there are but two passages in the Old Testament clearly stating a resurrection. These are Isa. 26:19 and Dan. 12:2. Both are quite late—too late for our purpose. But it is also admitted that there are many passages pointing to a belief in an underworld quite similar in character to the general pattern of the Babylonian *Aralu*.

The concept of *Sheol* was a necessary preluding for the later development of a resurrection. If there is to be a resurrection, there must be preservation somewhere of the departed in order that he might be reinvigorated. Such is the case in all of the nature myths. Osiris, Tammuz, Adonis, Alein Baal—all go to the underworld. There they remain until sought by the sister-wife. There is more dependence of the idea of the resurrection upon the concept of *Sheol* than has been generally admitted.

In addition to the passages Isa. 26:19 and Dan. 12:2, there are other references that have been widely debated. Traditionally they have been accepted as allusions to an after-life, not a mere shadowy existence in *Sheol*. Literary criticism has denied this as being inconsistent with the evolution of theological thought. May we emphasize that religious thought is not always consistent, and certainly it is necessary to realize that theological dogma is a later rationalization of the hopes of more adventurous worshipers, and oftentimes in response to the general body of communicants. Certainly this was true with Judaism. As Frazer has pointed out,⁴² our Old Testament was edited and canonized by adherents to the orthodox group, which for

⁴⁰ *The Religion of the People of Israel* (New York: Macmillan, 1925).

⁴¹ *Myth and Ritual*, pp. 80 ff., 180 ff.

⁴² *Op. cit.*, I, 24 f.

a long time was the minority group. This group expunged from the record most of what was inconsistent with its views. For this reason it is only occasionally that we glimpse something of the unorthodox views. These fleeting visions are quite illuminating.

The striking similarity of Job 19:25 to the statement of the first Alein Baal epic, "I know that Alein Baal liveth, that Zebul [the exalted, honored one (?)], Lord of the earth exists," has already been quoted several times.⁴³ The further conviction that because "Alein Baal lives [i.e., has been resurrected] the heavens shall rain oil and the valleys flow with honey" is of even more significance. Zophar's answer to Job's unorthodox affirmation is that the wicked shall not see those symbols of prosperity: "He shall not look upon the rivers, the flowing streams of honey and butter."⁴⁴ Professor Irwin has already pointed out indications that Job at least gave consideration to the thought of the nature religion as a possible solution to his problem. Changes in the text prevent us from knowing whether or not Job found his solution there, but at least we are justified in supposing that such thought was then current.

The thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel is another passage that has been greatly discussed. It is rightfully agreed that here we have nothing but a vision, that the reincarnation of the dry bones is in terms of a whole people, and that under no consideration can we construe it in terms of a resurrection of the individual. There are, however, some points to which we might call attention. From a psychological standpoint Ezekiel reveals knowledge of a belief in a resurrection; but even though he speaks in terms of it, it is doubtful that he himself subscribes to that belief. More than once Ezekiel avails himself of the opportunity of speaking in terms of a foreign cult in order to heighten the contrast to the picture, or to sublimate it to his higher concepts. We also note that after the rumbling of the earthquake, the joining of the bones, and their reinvestment with flesh, there is still no life. At Ras Shamra, when Alein Baal is dead the statement is made, "Breath has left the Son of Men."⁴⁵ So with Ezekiel, until the bodies

⁴³ Virolleaud, *op. cit.*, XII (1931), 215 and Pl. XI, ll. 2, 20 ff.; Barton, *JAOS*, LII (1932), 226; cf. also Albright, *JPOS*, XII (1932), 201; Irwin, *Jour. of Relig.*, XIII (1933), 163.

⁴⁴ Job 20:17; cf. Virolleaud, *loc. cit.*, and Irwin, *op. cit.*, p. 163, n. 11.

⁴⁵ First Alein Baal Epic, col. II. l. 17; cf. Ezek. 37:9-10.

are imbued with breath, men cannot live. Again in verses 13–14 bodies are brought out of their graves, and Yahweh breathes into them his breath (רִיחַ). Again the action is figurative; but unless there was current some notion of a physical resurrection, it would have been impossible for Ezekiel to speak in terms of it.⁴⁶

In the Judean account of the creation⁴⁷ the burden of the story is not “the fall of man” but an explanation of why man does not live forever. It has affinities with the Babylonian myth of Adapa.⁴⁸ In each case man is denied the food that will endow him with life forever. In the background is the suggestion that it is within the power of the gods to make such an endowment. Again we have another foreshadowing of the later conception.

The many allusions in the prophecy of Hosea to the nature religion have been pointed out by Dr. May in his article, “The Fertility Cult in Hosea.”⁴⁹ The frequency of references attests that Hosea was speaking in terms that were quite familiar to his hearers. Two passages are of importance for us. In 5:13—6:3 we have a picture of the dying-rising god.⁵⁰ Because of the immediate context, then, we must admit that 6:2 is correctly interpreted by Dr. May as “He will make us live again after two days: on the third day he will resurrect us that we may live before him.” The following verse (3) is also in terms of this pattern. “Let us know! Let us pursue to know Yahweh [i.e. may we really come to know him]. As the dawn, his going forth is established, and he shall come to us like showers, like spring rain that waters the earth.” In the magical text for the production of rain from Ras Shamra⁵¹ the birth of Saḥar (dawn?) is a necessary prerequisite for the coming of rain. Quite evidently Hosea’s hearers were familiar with the story of the resurrected god and his function much as we have it from Ras Shamra.

In 13:14 we have still another allusion to this pattern. Most commentators read, “Shall I rescue them from the power of Sheol? Shall

⁴⁶ In the Masoretic text Ezekiel refers to God as אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה. The Septuagint deletes, but this only strengthens the Masoretic text, for it is well known that LXX changes the text wherever allusion to magic or foreign cult is recognized.

⁴⁷ Gen. 2:4b ff.

⁴⁸ Cf. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (2d ed., 1926), pp. 67 ff.

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 73–98.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁵¹ Virolleaud, *op. cit.*, XIV (1933), Pl. XIX, ll. 37 and 52.

I redeem them from Death? Where are thy plagues, O Death? Where is thy destruction, O Sheol? Compassion is hid from mine eyes." Clearly we have no resurrection here, but the questions definitely imply that it is within Yahweh's power to do so if he wished, and if he should have compassion.

These passages will suffice to show that the auditors of the prophets in Israel were well acquainted with the myths of the nature religion, and that the prophets took advantage of this as a foundation upon which to build their teachings. Some ridiculed, others sublimated, still others accepted with little change; but they were indebted at least for the means of making contact with their hearers. We may go even farther and suggest that because at least a group of the people clung tenaciously to certain ideas, the prophets were forced to meet the people on their own ground. And because of this tenacity, also, certain ideas were finally admitted to the Hebrew religion. The social experiences of men had taught them things they assumed to be fundamental. The criticism of the prophets revealed illogical and irrational thinking at times, and because of this criticism men struggled hard to find new reasons for their beliefs. Here the priest as theologian could make his contribution, and here, also, is why dogma trails religious thought.

This is not to deny that certain individuals made their contribution. They have received their credit oftentimes to the exclusion of the common worshiper, the forgotten man of Israel.

